

TOC H JOURNAL



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THREEPENCE

Toc H for New Friends

What it is

Toc H is not to win men's friendship and their service for the benefit of others. It stands always, but especially now, when values which seemed permanent are being discarded, for truth and understanding, for unselfishness and fair dealing, for individual freedom based on a practical Christian outlook on life. Toc H works under a Royal Charter granted by H.M. King George V in 1922.

How it started

It began with Talbot House (Toc H is the signaller's way of saying T.H.) opened in 1915 in the Belgian town of Poperinghe, the nearest habitable point in the Ypres Salient. It was intended to be a sort of soldiers' rest house where men back from the line could find refreshment for body, mind and spirit. Owing largely to the Rev. P. B. Clayton, an Army Chaplain in charge, it soon secured a reputation in the British Expeditionary Force as a place of friendship and cheerfulness. It welcomed men not merely to a meal and writing material but to the small homely things that mean so much. Many who used it found their way to the Chapel in the loft and gained fresh strength to realise that "behind the ebb and flow of things temporal stand the Eternal Realities".

1919 to 1939

"Talbot" Clayton and a few survivors saw the need to recapture in peace-time the spirit of comradeship in common service and sacrifice which they had learnt in war and to pass it on to a new generation. The idea spread. By 1939 Toc H was established in over 1,000 places in the United Kingdom and had forged a chain linking 500 more throughout the Empire and beyond. The Old House at Poperinghe and its Upper Room, given back to Toc H, has been visited by many thousands, who have gained, as those before them, fresh strength to play their part steadfastly and cheerfully. More than 20 hostels (called Marks) have been opened and are available for those who get the chance to use them.

What it means in practice

In his efforts to further the objects for which Toc H exists, each member has what is called the Toc H Compass to guide him. Its Four Points may thus be summarised:

To Think Fairly. To win a chivalry of mind, whereby he will not be overready to condemn honest difference, but will be humbleminded in his judgment of great issues, avoiding prejudice and striving for truth.

To Love Widely. To learn the habit of trying day by day to understand and to help all sorts and conditions of men.

To Witness Humbly. Toc H is rooted in the supreme conviction that the great thing is to spread the weekday Christian Gospel. Every member is pledged to do his blundering bit by carrying the contagion quietly. The point here is that lives speak while words are merely spoken.

To Build Bravely. (a) To be resolute in building his own life, without forgetting that what matters most is not what he can do for himself but what he can do for others. (b) To see in Toc H a bridge between himself and the lives of others, and to build it bravely, regarding his share in doing so as a sacred trust.

Membership

Toc H wants men who are willing to put service before self, are trying to think fairly and are willing to offer friendship. You probably won't be asked to join, but if you feel you want to share in this great adventure, let us know. It will cost you no more than you can afford. If you would like to know more about it, ask any member you know or write to Toc H Headquarters, 47, Francis Street, London, S.W.1.

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TO ALL THE WORLD

A Christmas Meditation

O boundless God, perfect beauty, power and love,
Thou didst make men: they have marred Thy work.

Yet in pitying love

Thou dost come to them.

Conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
of the Blessed Virgin
and made Man,

Thou dost submit Thyself
to the changes and chances of this world.

O Humility of God,
coming in meekness and quietness
to dwell unknown and unrecognised
amid us proud and selfish men—

O Love, make me to love Thee.

Thou dost serve us: teach me to serve Thee.

Jesus, I thank Thee for giving Thyself to us,
for Thy love and pity to men.

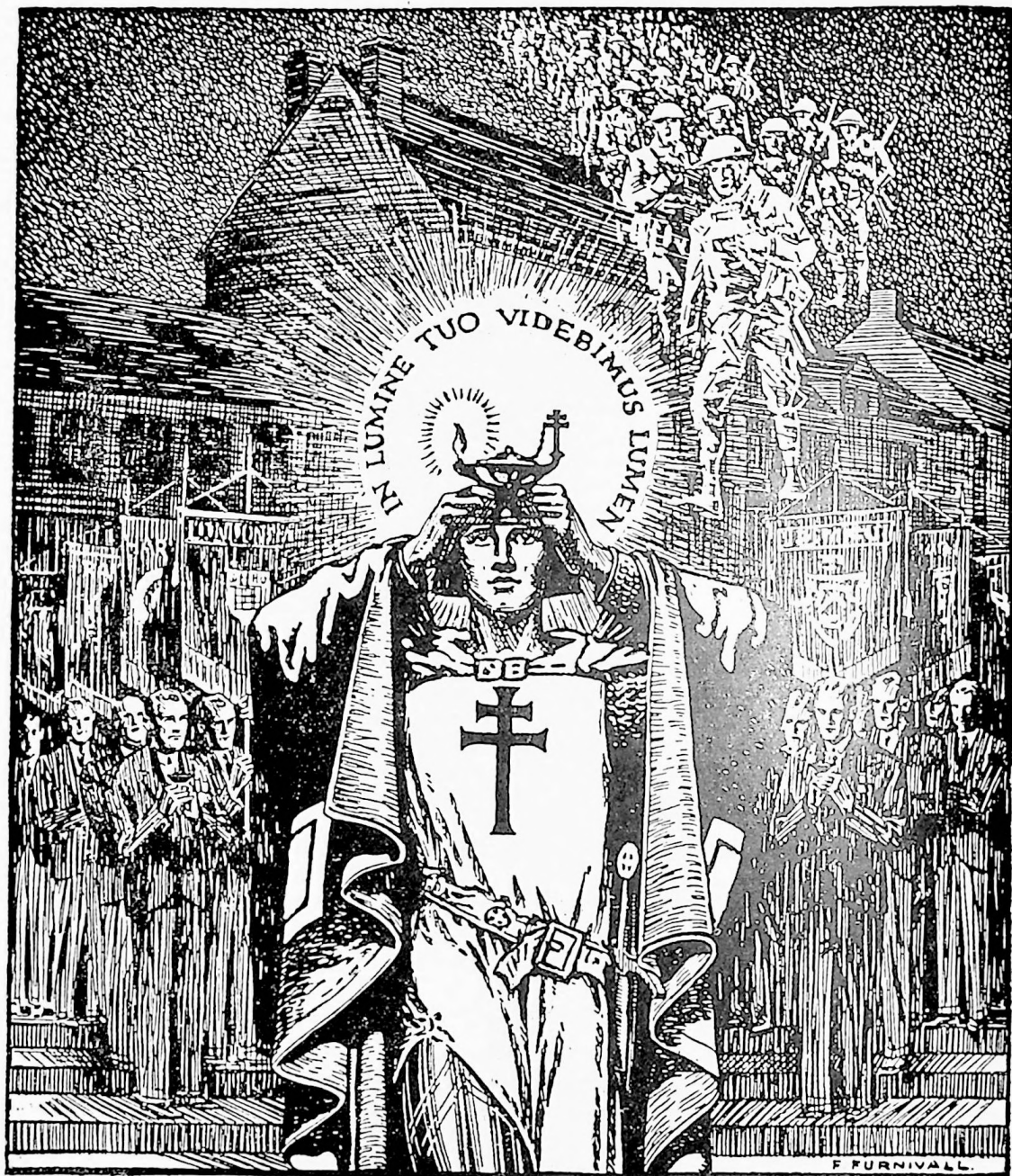
In quietness and confidence is Thy strength
and our true life.

Lord, cleanse my heart, rectify my thoughts,
fortify my purposes,

O Son of God: true Man, true God,
show Thyself to me
and all the world.

M. Pr.





"I SAW IN MY DREAM"



TALBOT HOUSE ('Toc H' for short) in Poperinghe, Flanders, was opened as a soldiers' club on December 11, 1915, and continued to serve the troops in the Ypres Salient until 1918. Out of its fellowship the Toc H movement had its beginning. The centre of the life of the House was the Chapel in the loft, the 'Upper Room'. Toc H was founded and continues as a Christian family of men.

In 1929 Lord Wakefield presented the 'Old House' in Flanders to Toc H, and it was a place of regular pilgrimage to members until the outbreak of the present war. According to the latest information Talbot House was totally destroyed by enemy action on May 29, 1940.

Toc H units everywhere keep its Birthday each year by lighting their Lamps, the symbol of our family, at 9 p.m., by their local time, on December 11, thus kindling a 'Chain of Light' which girdles the earth. This 'chain' has been started in different years in Australia, England, Canada, India, South Africa and New Zealand and in Poperinghe itself.

POPERINGHE was shrouded in freezing fog—just like a remembered day in December, 1917. As I reached the front door—the big white door shining a greeting through the grey air—iron-tired wheels rattled past on the cobbles of the narrow street. I caught a glimpse of a box-limber, drawn by a pair of mules. I am positive of this. I noticed the driver hunched up on the back of the near mule, his face buried in his up-turned coat-collar. One of the mule's ears wagged comically, like a semaphore. Then the limber was blotted out by a covered motor vehicle coming the other way, a squat armour-plated vehicle, with a Bren gun poked through a slit. It grazed the narrow pavement where I stood. The next moment it was swallowed in the fog. Was this 1917? Was it 1940? I cannot tell.

The door opened. A familiar voice—I feel sure now it was Olida's—welcomed me. But, when I come to think of it, I saw no one. I went in.

The Old House was full of light. It was full of voices. There was laughter on the stairs and somewhere in a back room they

were singing the old songs. In contrast with the muffled sounds in the foggy street, the House itself spoke out clearly. Its voice was confident, its note was joy. There was a feeling in the air—I can't quite put words to it—of expectation.

A man came quickly down the stairs. He took both my hands in his, smiling and eager. "Come up with me," he said. "The others will be here soon. A lot of us are here already."

I knew his face instantly, as though I had been at school with him a long while ago. I can't put a name to him now—I don't believe I remembered one at the time. It did not seem to matter at all—we recognised each other, we were friends.

The first landing, the square open space, large as a room, as you leave the narrow steep curve of the stairs, was crowded with men. They moved incessantly about, group weaving a 'grand chain' in and out of group, restlessly moving, eagerly greeting one another, often laughing aloud. I found myself face to face for an instant with so many I knew, and the next instant I lost them. But

in the momentary meeting we seemed to say everything to each other, hardly needing words at all. That was a grand thing that night—there were no barriers any more.

I saw George there, and Alec, and 'Scorpy'—"Old Scorpy! they told me you had died fighting—out East somewhere—in '17." That sideways smile lit up his pale face (he was always pale) and then I lost him in the crowd.

Every now and then I caught Paul's voice. He must have been standing at the head of the stairs, welcoming newcomers. How very often has he done that in these last years! I had somehow missed him as I came up myself. I was glad to know him there.

Now I was looking 'Jingle' in the eyes—those china-blue, roguish eyes, hiding the deeps in him that only a few of us knew about. Only now, looking back, I remember that his name was in the list—I read it in the *Telegraph*—a full month before: 'missing, believed killed at St. Valery.' But I swear I saw him plain, and heard his voice, in the Old House that night; I can't be mistaken.

'Golly' gave me his hand for a moment (it was 1915 when he went away). I heard half a joke in Cecil's voice—it could be no one else—and the chorus of laughter round him; I didn't get a sight of his face. And then I found young John, no younger than many of the others but of quite another generation. No one seemed to notice his battle-dress—it ought to have looked queer among all those 'old sweats.' But no one was a bit old that night, not myself either. John put his arm through mine. He must have drawn me aside into the little bedroom at the corner of the landing—at least it has been a bedroom for years now, I think. Corporal Trower sat at a table there, in his Scotch bonnet, giving out books. There were thousands of books, no end of them, and no end of readers too, for all the room was so tiny. John leaned very close to me and whispered in my ear: "I put up my first stripe yesterday" (perhaps he didn't want the 'old sweats' to hear and grin) "and they talk of sending us—to Iceland. Iceland . . . Hush-hush!"

"Hush!", said someone on the landing

outside. The loud voices died on the instant—I heard the line of a song downstairs die away, too—

. . . . a-winding
Into the land of my dreams—

Then, just the chime of the tubular bells. (They have been with the Knutsford Test School for more than twenty years—I know all that—but they certainly rang, on the lower flight of the stairs, in the Old House at Poperinghe on the night I speak of). The chime rang on and on, the tune rose clear and very joyful. It filled the whole world where we were. It played an old tune—

Adeste fideles—O come, all ye faithful . . .

* * * *

"So great a cloud of witnesses": I suddenly heard my own voice, speaking aloud. We were in the Upper Room. Thousands of us, ten thousand of us, maybe—like that sea of faces at the Coming-of-Age Festival in the Crystal Palace in 1936. I fancy that, for just a second, I confused this scene with that. But we were in the Upper Room of Talbot House at Poperinghe, no doubt at all. A little place, a low raftered room, an attic—it held us all that night. A vast cathedral, the limits lost in shadow—and yet so close, so familiar, so much like home. Home—that's what I mean, we all meant that.

There was silence, not a man moved, we stood in our ranks. Then the clock began to strike. It may have been the bell of St. Bertin's, at the back of the Grande Place. It came to us like Big Ben, on the wireless, from home. Nine . . .

"Light!"—we all knew the voice which said that single word. Tubby was there, he must have been, of course he was with us there. I didn't see him step forward, for it went suddenly dark. Through the low fan-wise windows, eastward towards Ypres, I caught a sight of the white flicker in the night. You have seen it often over London lately and elsewhere—you'll know the way the sky opens white and quickly closes again—the guns flashing up the line.

Then I saw the Lamp alight, we all saw it—rank on rank of faces, quite still, dimly



seen in the glow of that tiny flame, all golden. Tiny golden flame, perfectly steady, shining at the centre of a great cloud of witnesses, shining out and out round the whole earth in the Chain of Light.

I don't remember hearing the opening words of the Ceremony spoken. But I heard the response—

We will remember them

It went echoing on and on. And with the deep undertow of sound I saw the light leap—golden points of light, kindled Lamp by Lamp—westward through the December night. I saw no Lamps themselves, and no hand kindling them. I was vividly aware of them there, the little families of men, waking, standing to their lights, keeping the Birthday of Talbot House with all of us. The sound of voices without number, taking up the answer and passing it further on—over the dark sea and across the Western Continent and so to

the Pacific Ocean and the lands under the Southern stars—the sound and the leaping light itself were like a song that we sang together. I cannot think it will ever end.

It sounds so confused, so mixed up, as I try now to write down how I felt and what I saw with my own eyes. The others saw it, too, a great cloud of witnesses. All this passed, I suppose, in a moment of time, a fragment, like a single small crystal, of our everlasting life. I have an odd, strong feeling that time stood still while this passed. Perhaps eternity is just time standing still, so that the spirit can find fulfilment. I don't really know what I mean. I had better not try to describe how I felt then.

Then there was silence, inside each one of us, so to speak—for the undertow of the sound of voices receiving the light, greeting it, passing it on, continued, an endless song. We stood in the silence, not a man of us

moved. We faced the tiny golden flame, thousands of faces regarding it, on guard round it. And as we watched, the Light grew more and more. It illumined all the altar, the Carpenter's Bench, on which the Lamp stood. The curtains and the canopy of the altar glowed deep crimson round about it and above it. Every well-remembered piece of furniture, every picture, in the Upper Room showed clear in this light; each had a life of its own. The two tall candlesticks, gifts of affection and remembrance like all the rest, stood out, I recollect, like pillars holding up the House, black and strong against the light.

* * * *

"The Light that lighteth Everyman . . . I am the Light." Did Someone speak those words aloud? Did I hear them, did others hear them, within our own selves? I cannot tell now. I know only that suddenly we were

kneeling. We were hiding our bowed faces, not from the small golden flame burning on the wick of the Lamp, but because we had seen a great Light. It covered us, it discovered us to ourselves, to each other. It was awe-ful, but it did not make us afraid. The name of it was Love and Joy and Peace. We knew that the Carpenter was at His bench. The Master of the House was in the midst of us, His men.

* * * *

I cannot rightly tell you about the experience, not so as to make it plain to any but myself. And I am not myself clear about it—all of this came so quickly and went again. I cannot forget it. I should like to pass it on if I could—the Moment of Seeing, which always awaits a man in Toc H and is so rarely apprehended.

With the great Light I awoke. And, behold, it was a dream.

And thus it came to pass

WE waited in the dug-out, where some would sleep this and many other nights. Some of the women lay propped on their bunks, knitting interminable khaki for the winter, this one pencilled notes in her Red Cross handbook, that one chatted with a warden about new novels, the men wandered restlessly in and out, a mixed four, sitting on beds with a packing-case at their knees, played bridge. The place was merely a vaulted recess, bedroom for three dozen people, in a labyrinth of wine-vaults, deep below 'The Hill'. The air was full of the rich honey-sweet smell of countless barrels of wine. In one part girls packed bottles, singing as they worked late, in another shirt-sleeved men tapped the barrels or looked critically at a candle flame through the ruby wine in a sample bottle, in a third clerks checked and scribbled in an improvised office two storeys below ground. No sound from the dangerous world above us came down so deep.

Michael and I, tin-hatted, went up to survey the night. The sheen of brilliant moonlight met us as we pushed aside the blanket at the door. In the misty silver air a grand

shape stood stoutly on guard, an ancient four-square shadow pointing with its four vanes upward to the full moon, attended by two near stars. Other stars came and went quickly above the expanse of the Hill—the bursting shrapnel of a heavy barrage. And the air was thick, and seemed to be shaken, by guns answering one another across London. An enemy bomber droned heavily overhead. It was a most beautiful—and a dangerous—December night.

We waited for a lull and then walked across the silent and deserted Hill. In the deep 'valley' below us enormous blocks of medieval masonry from a shattered bastion cast uncouth shadows. Among the tumbled ruins of old buildings, some so lately the homes of our own Toc H folk, one older than all lifted an unbroken black rampart: its core was the great Roman Wall. For the rest, the familiar silhouette of London, mysterious but substantial in the moonlight, stood unchanged—a city asleep, but proud and living. We turned back our steps towards the business of this night.

* * * *

An hour before 'Wag' had carried the Silver Lamp in his hands from a safe place to the church. Three of us, under tin hats, walked over with him, the Lamp's most informal bodyguard. And now, a score of us, men and women, filed through the narrow Porch Room door and groped our way by the flicker of a torch into the church.

We stumbled over *débris* of splintered wood and crumbled stone. The interior looked far larger than by day, different from the guise in which we had all known it so long. Flecks of bright moonlight through the dangling, shredded window-lights struck on a Norman pillar and touched the chaos of broken pews. Through a huge archway—from the top of where the great East window had been, down to the ground—we looked out into the dim moonlit landscape. We were facing the place where, for so many centuries, men had knelt before an altar, as one faces from the covered Passion Theatre at Oberammergau the scene of Betrayal and Crucifixion under the open sky beyond. We looked, here too, upon a silent drama of life destroyed which shall rise again. And then we went down under the church tower, still standing, into the low undercroft. We stooped and groped our way, by torchlight, to the far end of this passage below the church floor. In catacombs like this Christian men had met before in times of peril.

We were gathered quietly in the unfinished chapel where the ashes of some of the Elder Brethren are ranged in urns round the apse. In the centre, where we now set the Lamp, Archbishop Laud's body had once rested after execution; over our heads now his Communion Table lay buried in a quarry of crumbled masses of stone. Violence is as old and new as man.

It was blackest darkness. We could not see our neighbour, nor how many stood motionless in company with us—there might be a multitude without number, men standing, on duty, at this moment all round the world. The deep boom of a gun came to us muffled down there, it moved the still air and echoed for a few moments.

I struck a match and kindled the Lamp. The flame was very low, a glowing tip which scarcely showed us to each other. Calling to mind the "great cloud of witnesses" of our most simple act—the living family, now on service everywhere and that far larger company, living more fully than we can yet understand, who had worshipped on this ground during eight hundred years—I said the words of 'Light.' Michael led our family prayers after that.

Thus, more strangely, more simply but even more significantly than in all the years past, the Chain of Light started on its journey round the world. BARCLAY BARON.

WHO READS MAY RUN

1. War Chests

The War Chest Scheme has now been in operation for one year and, bearing in mind the fact that the first opening on January 15 last followed very rapidly on the original date of issue, the results have been very encouraging, and indicate that the scheme is well worth pursuing.

Toc H present commitments in Services Clubs at the moment involve over fifty thousand pounds covering the next three years and, naturally, with extended activities this amount is bound to be greatly exceeded. Nothing but faith in Toc H and its work, backed by sound support from the member-

ship and the generosity of the public, could justify our proceeding.

In the last year the War Chests have contributed the very solid amount of approximately £2,500 towards these costs, and all concerned deserve congratulation.

After one year's working, a few facts regarding these boxes might be helpful to those who are undertaking the onerous task of their distribution and collection in Branches and Groups.

There are, theoretically, approximately 7,000 boxes in current use, but examination of the records for the first year's returns shows

that, in actual practice, not more than 4,000 are in use, that is to say, showing a return. Many of the boxes have obviously been placed in the right hands and are producing a steady income but many, due, no doubt, to the peculiar circumstances in the country at the moment, have had a very haphazard existence, sometimes coming to light after six or nine months, and sometimes not coming to the surface at all.

The difficulties that lie in the face of the steady pushing of these boxes are obvious, but the results that have been obtained should encourage us all to endeavour to do better and to be more methodical in producing the results at Headquarters.

Headquarters, on its part, will do its utmost to despatch the necessary re-scaling labels by return of post and it will be found that for the October quarter this rapid sending out of labels has been carried out.

2. Membership Subscriptions

From the many enquiries received at Headquarters, there appears to be some misapprehension in the minds of Branch and Group officers regarding the payment of membership subscriptions by those of their members who are at present serving in His Majesty's Forces.

Many Treasurers have solved the situation by paying such subscriptions from Branch or Group funds, but this would appear to be an "easy" way out.

It is quite realised that many members in the Services have had to sacrifice comfortable incomes for Service pay and, at first glance, this may seem a reasonable explanation of why subscriptions should not be paid by members in the Forces. It should, however, be remembered that before this war began there were more than six thousand Toc H members in the Navy, Army and R.A.F. and the immensely high average yearly subscription of between 3/6d. and 4/- per member was maintained.

It appears, therefore, to be not quite fair on our members now in the Forces not to apply to them for payment, as these members are willing to shoulder their own responsibilities.

Headquarters, naturally, is always open to reasonable suggestions regarding improvements for the scheme and anyone who has any comments to make upon the matter—bearing in mind that records must, by law, be kept at Headquarters and, therefore, the issue of labels must be issued from there—should send them to 47, Francis Street, where they will receive every consideration. If your suggestion is not adopted, please remember that all suggestions have to be married to actual practice and, although they may appear quite sound in their origin, are frequently too difficult in application.

At the moment, Headquarters' suggestion on this subject is that a great deal can be done at the Unit end by regularity of collection and forwarding of contents, also by the dissemination of information regarding our Clubs both at home and in the war zones, including Iceland, among the box-holders.

In normal times, members in the Services are classified as "Central and Services" and are, of course, looked after centrally. The number involved are now too large for this to be done successfully from Headquarters and members are, therefore, remaining on their own Unit Rolls. The implication is, of course, that those remaining in civil life should see to it that their absent members are kept in touch with the family.

War is bringing its losses, but it is granting its opportunities, and much of what is to be built when peace comes again will depend upon the associations maintained during present times.

If Units fail to collect subscriptions from their members who are away, it would appear to point to failure in the maintenance of real friendship.

Difficulties are becoming the property of all Unit Executives, and the results produced by willing hearts and a generous intelligence will be their own encouragement. Membership subscriptions are due on January 1, 1941, and payment by members in the Forces through you will reflect your unit liaison.

J. J. M. L.

FOR BLACKOUT AND BILLET

PAGES FOR READERS WHO HAVE MORE TIME AND A TASTE FOR MORE

WITH TOC H IN ICELAND

Tubby recently paid a five-days' visit to Iceland and on his return broadcast a talk on it in the B.B.C. programme to the Forces, from which the following is taken. He found Geoffrey Johnston getting ready a Toc H House in Reykjavik, which has since been opened to troops; soon after Alec Churcher left home to join him. More news of this hopeful venture will appear in next month's JOURNAL.



UPON the invitation of the War Office, two of my colleagues from Toc H Headquarters arrived in Iceland early in the autumn.

By a coincidence during September I was invited by the Admiral to visit Iceland. Orkney could be left in the experienced hands of Sutherland Graeme and Donald Cochrane, and their happy team; so I went North for a brief spell to sample a situation not then known to me. I knew, however, that my present Bishop, of Aberdeen and Orkney, Dr. Deane, was due in Iceland as the guest of our men, in order to perform the Confirmation of some 200 Army candidates. It there-

fore was the utmost joy to me, upon the very evening of the day when I reached Reykjavik, to find myself invited by the Senior Army Chaplain to act as Bishop's Chaplain at the Confirmation, which almost filled the fine Cathedral Church that very night. It was a week-night service and very much impressed all witnesses, including the Norwegian Church Authorities. The Confirmation reminded me, by the whole spirit manifest among the officers and men, of Talbot House Confirmations in the old Upper Room, now laid in ruins. Our Bishop (who had come up with Lord Gort, Inspector General) contra-

dicts his age at 73. He showed not the slightest sign of fatigue, spoke with a marked effect among the troops, and then conducted with a great dignity the Confirmation of at least a hundred, among whom were officers, warrant officers and some senior N.C.Os.

This was on Friday night. On Sunday morning, the Bishop preached at three parades in Reykjavik, and then undertook a journey far up country, necessitating arduous roads, a twelve hours' run, and halts for several isolated units. Upon the following day, ere he embarked, he held another major Confirmation in a big British Camp. He joined Lord Gort, and they came down to Scotland together. Both of these men had done a lot of good, and left behind them fresh inspiration which will long endure.

Meanwhile, I had a happy time of it, although I had no leisure for long journeys. A series of most courteous invitations came in to me from the Army Chaplains, and from the Commanding Officers adjacent to Reykjavik itself. These I fulfilled as fully as I could during three days, and saw some Regiments I had known of old, with one or two old friends of Flanders days, who were again in khaki for the war.

I spent the happiest time on Sunday morning with the Canadians, who are there in strength, magnificently housed in Yukon huts, which they brought with them to withstand the climate.

Elsewhere much ingenuity is shown in the arrangement of the Nissen hutments, for several useful architects have been especially appointed by the Regiments to work a transformation of these Nissens in such a way that they become most pleasant. There is a great shortage of building materials in Iceland, since local stone is rare, and timber in bulk is unobtainable; but lava mixed with concrete can be used. In other ways I envy the conditions in which the troops are stationed. Not only is their food most excellent, especially the fish, which can be got at very little cost, but also they are provided with natural baths by the gigantic flow from the hot water springs high in the hills. While in New Zealand I had been impressed by Rotorua and its vol-

canic pools: I never had imagined that a land could be provided out of natural springs with an illimitable supply of highly heated water in big streams. Most of the troops can, therefore, bathe at will in admirable lakes all the year round, and fuel is not, as I had imagined, the anxious problem which one would expect. Indeed, had Denmark only been allowed by her invaders still to ship the pipes which were all ready when the war broke out, for transference to Iceland's public services, there would have been throughout the town of Reykjavik a perfect system of entirely free public supply of water to all houses, not only for their washing, but for their heating. It is indeed almost a miracle that all this water does not lose its warmth in forty miles' transit from the hills. This splendid public provision was unfortunately delayed, and Reykjavik's pipes are now retained in Denmark, or else have gone to feed the Nazi iron foundries.

As for the spirit of the Iceland folk, I think it may be said beyond a doubt that the Icelandic people are content with the most liberal and most courteous treatment they are receiving from British hands. Good prices have been paid in all directions, supplies have been brought up to supplement what would have been a most impoverished winter, with food extremely short and much anxiety.

The Government of Iceland is not foolish. While they preserve their ancient independence, they would be blind indeed did they not see that British occupation bears good fruit. The troops have been extremely well-behaved, and crimes of violence have not occurred; friendship is springing up outside the town between the troops and many simple homes. In Reykjavik itself there still remains a younger element somewhat inclined to regret the disappearance of German influence, which had been very strong before the war.

In 1943 Iceland was due before the war to make its big decision whether it would remain attached to Denmark and subject to their King, or whether its people would prefer to be a sovereign state, detached from Denmark. Only the unknown future can confirm the choice which will be made after

the war. Iceland might be disposed to join Great Britain, with full Dominion status, or to be beneath the ægis of America. Meanwhile, we can be happy and content that British troops and British ships supply friendly contact with the Western world.

Despite its name, Iceland is not a station which need be pitied. Our troops are in good heart, secure from air raids; all the shops and streets are extremely well lit; the harbour lights shine out to sea without any hesitation; and, were it not for home anxieties, the men on duty there would be content.

On my last night, the Admiral himself made a convincing speech to a fine crowd, mainly of Army and the R.A.F. Some of the Army Staff were also present, together with the British Consul-General, who is himself a member of Toc H. Behind the Chairman there was also seated the American Minister, who represents the United States in Iceland, a personality of much distinction. It needs to be remembered at this juncture that Iceland is almost a half-way house between Great Britain and the eastern seaboard of Canada and of the United States. I therefore have high hopes that Toc H in Iceland will prove itself most strategical in the rebuilding of our brotherhood after the war. So may it be.

Two conversations will remain with me. The first was with an old friend Eric G—, whom I discovered after twenty years as Regimental Sergeant-Major in a Canadian Unit of distinction. When I had last seen Eric, he had been a Captain on the threshold of field rank. This time, however, he was over age when war broke out, so that they could not take him in a resumption of his old position; but he insisted on accompanying them in some capacity, and thus he came. He told me that the twenty years between had been most fruitful. He had built his home; brought up his family; established them in their careers, and seen them doing well. He had decided that it was his duty, as a world citizen and a Christian man, again to come on the Crusade in Europe. He realised that we had been mistaken in thinking that the Treaty of Versailles, and all that went before it, was sufficient. More was now

needed, and the man was ready. Across 3,000 miles he, therefore, came, leaving a first-rate business and his home. On this occasion he was quite determined that he would not return to those he loved until he had done something definite to drive away the fever and the fear. His one ambition was that this last chapter should be conclusive, leaving Europe free. By coming thus himself, when close on fifty, instead of reading newspapers at home, he hoped, please God, to make his contribution in such a way that his own children's children should not be summoned to take part in war. He put all this so quietly, so well, with such sincerity and honest faith, that I shall always cherish his conviction against the background of that Iceland scene.

My final memories much be concerned with two small ships. The first, a Gravesend tug, which plodded up five days of sea to Iceland, entirely unperturbed by the long trip. The Skipper told me, when I went aboard, that he had carried on in London River until the time of Dunkirk; then he went three times to that inferno and brought back four hundred men. He did not seem to think that this was a remarkable achievement. Indeed, when he had patched the numerous holes the *Tanga* had sustained in that adventure, he cleared for Brest and made two runs from there. He had, in all, rescued five hundred men. So he came back, at last, to London River in order to pursue his normal work. Then came the Blitzkrieg and his house went down. His family was saved, but he resented this inauspicious treatment of his home; he took it as a personal affront. Therefore, he volunteered, with his ship's company numbering six, and with a freeboard roughly of three feet, to take his tug right round Cape Wrath to the Outer Hebrides, where we encountered him still going strong. Then came the news that a strong tug was needed around the coast of Iceland. Once again he volunteered to take his vessel there. She was not now his own, she was the King's. The Skipper and his shipmates did not think anything about the trip. They were not much impressed. It was enough for them that they were needed. Thus they came to Iceland and reported.

P. B. C.

SERVICE MEMBERSHIP

A Toc H Padre tackles a question which is exercising a good many minds now.

A VERY practical problem of Toc H recruitment and membership has arisen during the present war. Large numbers of men in H.M. Forces have been brought into close contact with Toc H through the Service Marks and Clubs and Canteens, and these men are anxious to continue their contact and in many cases to take upon themselves the responsibilities of membership. To meet these needs we have devised the system of Service Passes, and it is probably true to say that every unit has also tried to encourage members of the fighting forces to attend the meetings of the local unit. It is probably equally true to say that for one reason or another these two methods at present leave much to be desired. They also raise a number of questions in our minds.

The system of Service Passes, with all its excellence, is obviously open to abuse and introduces a complication as to the status of those who hold them. Are they probationers, and if so in what sense are they receiving the instruction and training usual for probationers? Or are they simply a new class of associates, and if so in what way are they different from other friendly visitors?

Attendance at meetings also has its difficulties. The frequent changes of station and necessary fulfilment of guard duties, fatigues and so forth makes regular attendance most difficult and any consecutive scheme of training a virtual impossibility. Are we to say that training does not matter, or should we postpone all initiations until after the war?

I believe that these and similar questions will never find adequate answers because we are asking the wrong kind of question. We are too often trying to press military conditions into a mould of Toc H life which is civilian in its organisation and peace-time in its outlook. Toc H was born in a war, and its war-time life, confined as it then was to the Army, expressed itself round the "Hearth" of the Old House by personal contact between men. The wider life of

peace-time has made it grow a system and has taught us much of value. This peace-time organisation is so much part of our life that we find it hard to realise that Groups and Branches and Lamps and Badges and District Teams are not essential to Toc H. Such things are only a way we have found of keeping alive the spirit, outlook, life of the Family and so letting it grow in the world and shape the course of men. There must be other ways, and in the different world of war we must expect to meet them and seek to find them.

To illustrate this I suggest we take the problem of the attendance of service men at unit meetings. Although in a few places this method may be successful there is no doubt that most units find it a major problem and indeed a source of discouragement. I believe that we are wrong in expecting it to work.

Regular attendance at the meeting of the unit has in the past been rightly regarded as a normally essential part of Toc H life; for by it the spirit of fellowship is found and fostered. And the character of this meeting is what in great measure set Toc H apart from other societies as being a "fellowship of whole men." We rightly expect that in Toc H there shall be a mixing of classes and creeds, and that members shall bring to the family not simply their interest in one section of life, but their full range of interests, of pleasures and problems, of responsibilities and prayer. Any unit which draws its members chiefly from one class, whether social, political or ecclesiastical, is in danger of producing only a 'partial' or 'closed' fellowship in which the members share with each other only one side of their lives, namely that common interest which they all possess and which has drawn them together.

This danger of partial fellowships is very real and is as truly fought against by units. But there is one side of Toc H life where the attempt to bring an existing fellowship (which some would call closed or partial)

into a wider range of interest has met with consistent failure. I speak under correction, but the files at Headquarters certainly indicate that the position of Branches attached to Marks is a perennial problem. Membership in the Mark does not imply membership in the Branch and Branch members do not all live at the Mark. At the meeting of the Branch, members from outside find themselves in someone else's home and feel always a little as visitors, and hostellers who may not be members of Toc H experience a disturbing sense of being intruders at their own fireside. This has been felt as a weakness, yet no solution has been found. It would seem that here also we are asking the wrong question. The fellowship of hostellers in a Mark is not 'partial' but 'whole.' The Branch meeting actually restricts and limits the fellowship of the Mark and renders it 'partial'.

Why this discussion about Marks, you will say, in an article on Service membership? Because it illustrates and justifies the point to be made. The Marks represent an ancient way of Toc H living. They are in direct descent from the Old House and represent, as it were, the primitive tradition of our family. They have continued in peace-time the old war-time manifestation of the spirit of Toc H, and they give us a clue which may help to solve our problem of service members.

The fellowship of service men in their own Service, Army, Navy or Air Force, is not a partial fellowship. These men have been drawn into a common life not of choice but of stern necessity: not with chosen boon companions but with men of all characters and callings. This common life demands their whole life. It creates an existing fellowship which is stronger and more real, because more insistent, than any fellowship they may have through contact with the world outside the services. Their fellowship in their unit, be it A.A. Battery, regiment, ship or station, is a fellowship of whole men. Such a pre-existing fellowship cannot be fused with the fellowship of a civilian unit of Toc H. The Services feel themselves inevitably as strangers and sojourners, no matter how much they love and appreciate the friendship

of the local unit. Nor ought we to attempt this fusion, for by so doing we should tend to break down a deeper fellowship of strenuous service, a fellowship in which the Old House had its birth.

How then are we to meet the demand for Toc H in the Services? I would suggest by a much more whole-hearted effort to form units of Toc H within the Services themselves, indeed within each particular service group which obviously presents itself, the ship, the camp, the regiment or battalion or platoon. These units should normally be *confined* to such a group, for the work of the unit is to accept the pre-existing fellowship which has sprung up under compulsion and to give to it that voluntary expression in the adventure of Christian living which alone can capture and knit together the unsatisfied desires of men.

We should work for an extension of service units which meet perhaps in a hut or a billet or a café. The life of such units may be short, yet is a good venture. Books and thoughts may be hard to come by, but the life will be real although the Rushlight is but a candle or a petrol lighter.

The doubts of those in authority may have to be resolved. Training of new members may have to be done by civilians at the local meeting-place, but should always be for service men only. Books are of great importance, because time and opportunity for reading can be found even in the middle of a *Blitzkrieg*, and reading can in part replace oral instruction. Here perhaps too the local unit will find salvation by being forced to revive that often languishing library of Toc H literature.

It may seem rash to advocate a dual system in Toc H service units and civilian units. Yet why not? When the present tyranny is over-past some new way will come. The Old House has fallen and passed into corruption through the invader, yet it may well rise again a spiritual house in the hearts and lives of defender and invader alike. Fellowship is a gift of God. We must accept these gifts as they come to us, and accept also our calling to use the things temporal so as to make them temples of eternal realities.

TOWARDS POST-WAR TOC H

What will Toc H be like after this War, and what part will it be able to play in the world which will then emerge? Many members are wondering. The West-Midlands Area Executive decided recently to focus some of its thoughts on these problems and at its next meeting to consider the truth of the following analysis, made by BOB CANNING, of past experience and present tendencies, and to try to find answers to the questions raised. We hope to hear something about their conclusions in a future article.

IT is not too soon to think about Toc H after the War. The end may not be for years, but it may come quite suddenly. However much of our time and energy are engrossed by the national effort, however busy we are individually and corporately, it is essential that we should find time to consider the future and be prepared to make our contribution to the solution of post-war problems and the rebuilding of civilised life.

How will the organisation and methods of Toc H need to be adapted to work most effectively in furtherance of its ideals? Which of the changes brought about by the war should be retained? What used we to consider important which has proved of little value and *vice versa*? What lessons have we learnt which are of consequence for the future?

1. Since the outbreak of war Toc H has become more vigorously active, but looser in organisation. Many members have not been able to attend meetings regularly, and have given the few remaining Jobmasters little chance of exercising their calling. On the other hand, they have in most cases leapt with joy to many tasks for others, and are doing their utmost to put over Toc H in whatever circumstances they happen to be. Is this a good or a bad thing? Ought we to encourage more personal service at the expense of attendance at meetings?

2. Members have discovered three surprising facts. First and foremost they have found how much more can be done in a day or a week than ever they realised before; it has proved possible under the pressure of events to take on one fresh activity after another, to perform all-night duties in addition to daily work, and to continue at very high pressure for long periods. The sacrifice of pleasure involved, the overthrow of lazy

habits and the rejection of weak excuses for doing so much and no more, have seemed no hardship.

Secondly, members withdrawn from regular contact with Toc H have thought more of it in consequence and are likely to come back much keener than ever before.

Thirdly, it is amazing but true that other people think more of it too, and its ideals are securing acceptance in all sorts of unexpected persons. Is it not likely then that when active service and the demands of civil defence no longer take first claim; when the black-out, the risk of assembly in numbers, and potential danger to the home cease their restrictive effect on meetings; when members are free from the fear of giving away vital secrets, and without the weight on their minds arising from consciousness of a world at war, is it not likely that men with experience and knowledge of Toc H will come back to infuse it with new life? Will it be possible to retain the new wine in old bottles? What must the new bottles be like?

3. The staff in the provinces used to be the nursemaids and office boys of the membership, spending their turn nursing weak units into existence, trying to keep the dead shells of failing families alive, acting as conveners and secretaries of committees cutting little ice. Those remaining have become full-time propagators of Toc H and examples of its spirit in action, no longer tied to offices, and meeting rooms, but at work in a wider world. Is this not a change for the better? Do we not want these living examples of Toc H in action to continue as such and leave the Branches and Groups to fend for themselves, to flourish where, by their own efforts, they deserve to flourish, and to fade out where constant injections of encouragement and advice prove necessary?

4. The pre-war membership looked to Headquarters for a lead—in little things and big—a lead which often was not, and should not, have been forthcoming. The war has brought a gain in independence; the membership is beginning to assert itself, run its own affairs, and direct its own activities, including those of the full-time staff locally and at headquarters. Is this not another embryo achievement which might have been considered a consummation devoutly to be wished, but oh, so impossible? It is as yet a mere beginning, but likely to develop. Should not this development be encouraged now and after the war, until the membership takes and keeps control of project and policy, directs the activity of its officers, whole or part-time, paid or unpaid, and exemplifies an almost perfect democracy.

5. Many of the old time committees with their monthly meetings have become things of the past. We do not meet to weigh up and criticise annual reports of units, to argue interminably whether Jim Brown ought to be transferred to general membership, to discuss our slow growth and the need for new units. We get on with the job, and thereby infect other individuals with the germ of Toc H, leaving the disease to do its worst. Do we need to revive these old committees? Were we not over-organised? Do annual reports, lists of members with age, jobs of service and spiritual allegiance get us anywhere? Should we not do better to look upon these as non-essentials and concentrate on response to the challenge of the times—of peacetime as well as war-time—in active fruitful work for our fellow men?

6. The Services Clubs up and down the country are interesting ever-increasing numbers of men and women in Toc H. There is promise of a big harvest of ex-service men after the War. Men will be enquiring about Toc H—Where does it meet—What can we do to help? What changes of organisation are desirable to gather in this harvest? Shall we aim at the formation of numbers of new units wherever two or three are keen to start, or the enlargement of existing units preparatory to splitting up? Shall we allow

new units to develop on their own lines, or try to mould them to the old pattern? Is the regular weekly evening meeting sacrosanct? Might not units be formed meeting once a month, having a fortnightly lunch or even a business man's Branch with an annual dinner? Cannot many more units be formed in works and business houses, in hotels and municipal departments, wherever men are already in association?

7. In pre-war days it seemed important to us that every newcomer should become a probationer, learn about Toc H, reach a certain standard of knowledge and achievement, and then be passed for membership or drop out. In the early days of our movement we made members easily and suffered by their lapses; we tightened up conditions of membership, introduced our pilots and became rather severe judges of aspiring members. Was it right and was it wise? Is not the unrealised extensive acceptance of Toc H ideals due to a considerable extent to those who in early days were "too easily" passed for membership and considered unsatisfactory members? Has there not been a tendency to freeze out the average man eager to do what he can to help, unwilling to submit to critical judgment by his fellows? Can we not combine maintenance of a high standard of membership with looser bonds of association for those who are keen to help, but lack any introspective desire to improve in character? Need we press men to become probationers? Can we not let them be part of the family for ever and a day if they wish, without signing a membership form, and with no distinction made between members and non-members, except eligibility for office?

8. Service Clubs have been a great success. Need they be closed when peace returns once more? Can they contribute to the solution of post-war problems by continuing on the same lines to serve the needs of ex-service men, as they travel the country in search of work and a settled home? Or can they be open to unemployed of all ranks, or used for temporary residence by those unfortunate refugees the rigours of War have forced us to intern, so that they may rapidly forget the restrictions

and inactivity of their war-time existence, renew their gratitude to the country of their adoption, and be in happy companionship while they are becoming absorbed once more into the community life?

These are some of the problems which

should be exercising the minds of all who have Toc H at heart. No single group of members can hope to solve them all, but the least among us may be able to contribute to their solution.

BOB CANNING.

UNDERNEATH THE ARCHES

THE first night I visited the Arches in East London, I was horrified by the crowding and the lack of comfort. The last night followed rain, and there were streams or drips from the roof that made things far worse.

I was one of a party of five serving cocoa at a halfpenny a cup and cheese rolls and cakes at a penny to some hundreds in London's Dockland.

The first shelter was used in the day-time as a store and had a number of orange boxes stacked at one end. These made fine beds on which to lay cushions or mattresses. The other end had swing doors, good enough to keep warmth in and rain out, but useless as protection. One couple had six children, the older ones ready with pennies to exchange for piping hot mugs of cocoa or "birdsnests" and "whiskers", as some cakes were dubbed. The little ones slept like kittens, or were asleep in a mother's arms. Two old cars in the next shelter were in use as bunks. How tired one must get of a steering wheel, having slept on it for a month!

Another Arch boasted a coke brazier, as foul as a witches' cauldron, but welcome when all round was damp and the gutter a stream. Between a brick roof and thick walls a jazz band of local lads destroyed the chance of sleep for anyone, till the hat went round and they left. A tin mug does as well for pennies as for cocoa.

The last of our visits required a visit to our base to refill the urn and the box of cakes. It was a toss-up whether cocoa or prayers came first. I remember waiting outside hopefully till the flashes came overhead, when we were invited under cover.

The crowd had their own pitches, but cocoa caused such congestion that serving it was a struggle. One night we were sold out, and sympathetic to those who got none. Any-

thing over six mugs was called a 'shipping order' and meant a return, to collect the balance. Then, a pause before we carried round the bag for empties and wished everyone "Goodnight." Two shared the urn as we went home to wash up and count the money. Twenty-five shillings might mean four hundred folks settling down on the ground or deck chairs to sleep—for sleep they must.

By the week-end another shelter was being served from a disused coffee shop. Here a thousand or more sleep in far more comfort, since some old Club boys organised the place, and took turns on duty. The first night the band was there to lead the celebration. Girls were dancing in couples while the lads stood in groups. Such good manners in dockland cheered my hopes for London's future citizens.

Next day, I said *au revoir* to one of the groups busy with evacuation by daytime, on guard for incendiaries at night. A ducky was playing hymn tunes on a tin whistle, a tin hat surprisingly on his back—would he carry on even in a raid? Down below in the Tube, I saw a lady with violets—violets in an air-raid shelter!

* * * *

Old folks, mothers and children are still in the front line, while there are towns that are surprised to hear a warning. Many folks are willing to leave London with a bundle or so saved from their homes. How gladly will they sleep in a bed again!

Any building with water and a lavatory serves as a billet better than those Arches. No hall with a good roof should be empty this winter.

Are our Branches working for evacuation? The L.W.H. and our wives must help. We cannot do enough ourselves.

ANGUS McCOWEN.

TOC H PUBLICATIONS

All communications regarding publications should be sent to the Registrar, Toc H, 47, Francis Street, London, S.W.1. Postage is extra on all publications unless otherwise stated.

BOOKS

- TALES OF TALBOT HOUSE. By Tubby. 1s.
 PLAIN TALES FROM FLANDERS. By Tubby. Longmans, 3s. 6d.
 TOC H UNDER WEIGH. By P. W. Monie. New Ed., Limp Linen, 1s.; 10s. per dozen.
 BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS. By P. W. Monie. Boards, 1s.
 TOWARDS NEW LANDFALLS. By Hubert Secretan. Boards, 1s.
 THE SMOKING FURNACE AND THE BURNING LAMP. Edited by Tubby. Longmans, Paper, 2s. 6d.; Cloth, 4s.
 A BIRTHDAY BOOK. Twenty-one years of Toc H. Illustrated. 176 pp. Reduced to 1s.
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PAMPHLETS

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- THE TOC H SONG BOOK. 135 songs, words and music. 1s.; 10s. per dozen.
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